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ABSTRACT

The agenda, structure, and responsibilities of a board of trustees standing committee--the campus student affairs committee--are discussed. The size, selection, and rotation of student affairs committee members will vary with the traditions and policies of the individual institution. If possible, the committee should include students among its membership. An agenda should be sent to members in advance of meetings, along with appropriate backup material. The responsibilities of the committee fall into four broad areas: representing students' interests in all policy decisions made by the board; ensuring the provision of adequate financial resources to support a comprehensive student affairs program; ensuring that board policies keep pace with students' changing needs as the institution enrolls a more diverse student body; and being visible to students as stewards of the health and welfare of the academic community. The committee develops policies that directly affect students, such as residence hall rules and codes of student conduct, and also represents student concerns when other board committees consider changes in academic programs or classroom facilities. Issues that the committee and the board may consider include: counseling, evening classes, developmental and remedial programs, store-front services, career services, services for students in off-campus programs, and facilities and services for handicapped students and senior citizens. (SW)

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Student Affairs Committee

Thomas G. Goodale

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AGB Standing Committee Series

This publication is part of a new AGB series devoted to strengthening the role of key standing committees of boards of trustees and regents. Several assumptions underpin the series:

☐ The real work of the boards should be accomplished in committee. An effective committee system will enhance the productivity of full board meetings.

☐ The committee structure of any board should mirror the full range of its responsibilities as a legal, corporate entity. That is, the committee organization should cover the oversight roles trustees are expected to fulfill.

☐ Although there is no optimum committee system, certain principles and procedural matters should prevail: A clear and comprehensive statement of responsibility for each standing committee should appear in the board's bylaws or other operating policy. Each committee should be staffed by an appropriate administrative officer with a trustee or regent as chairperson. No trustee should serve on more than two active committees, preferably one—not including an executive committee membership. Crisp, well-conceived meeting agendas together with background information bearing on the agenda should be provided each member in advance of scheduled meetings. The committee's chairperson and staff should work together to ensure that adequate information is prepared to support the business at hand.

☐ Committees have the responsibility of *recommending* decisions and courses of action to the full board.

As committee members seek more and more useful information in their areas of responsibility, it is important that a balance be struck between "too much" and "too little." It is incumbent on the committee, therefore, to be reasonable

and judicious in requesting information that may be too detailed in order to avoid even the appearance of becoming embroiled in administration. Perhaps all such requests should require an affirmative response to the questions: Does this request contribute to the committee's and the board's responsibilities for reviewing, setting, or approving institutional policies?

The AGB Standing Committee Series will eventually include a separate publication for each of the following committees: buildings and grounds, academic affairs, student affairs, development, nominating, and executive. Other committees will be added to the series in due course. The authors of these publications strive to stimulate committee members' resolve that their collective work will reflect favorably on the board's performance as a whole. They share the conviction that committees should, together with their chief executive, set aside time to reflect on their responsibilities, staff requirements, meeting agendas, and follow-up.

AGB and the authors welcome comments and suggestions for improving this publication, and the others in the series, in future editions.

This publication was made possible in part by a grant from The Frost Foundation.

Student Affairs Committee

Thomas G. Goodale

Thomas G. Goodale is vice chancellor for student affairs and professor of education at the University of Denver. He had extensive experience in college student personnel administration at the University of Florida, Iowa State, Michigan State, and North Dakota State, before going to Denver in 1981. He also lectures on substance abuse among college students.

Dr. Goodale holds a bachelor's degree and Ph.D. from Iowa State University, and a master's from Michigan State. He spoke at the AGB National Conference on Trusteeship in Denver in April 1982.

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Committee Charge

The traditional three-fold concept of American higher education—instruction, research, and service—must always have the student as its focal point. It is the responsibility of the board of trustees to ensure this focus.

Typically, the board delegates some of this responsibility to the student affairs committee, charged with ensuring that student concerns, viewpoints, and needs are considered by the board and officers of the institution. The student affairs committee, sometimes called the student life or student development committee, should provide policy guidance to assure high quality student life.

In recent years, colleges and universities increasingly have found that student concerns dominate policymaking and operations. As the Carnegie Council on Policy Studies in Higher Education states in its final report:

"We expect that students will be more nearly the center of attention on campus during the next 20 years than in the past 10. They will be recruited more actively . . . counseled more attentively, taught more conscientiously, placed in jobs more insistently, and the curriculum will be more tailored to their tastes . . . They will seldom, if ever, have had it so good on campus . . ." (p. 54).

The Carnegie Council's views also indicate some issues with which the student affairs committee often concerns itself:

- *recruiting and admissions*
- *student financial aid*
- *counseling, academic advising, remediation, and special programs to reduce attrition*

- *curriculum*
- *grading policies*
- *evaluation of faculty*
- *job placement and career programs.*

Of course, primary responsibility in some of these areas rests with other board committees. Curriculum and grading policies, for example, are the province of the academic affairs committee, but are intimately related to the quality of student life. Clearly, the interests of the student affairs committee often cut across the work of the other board committees.

In general, the role of the student affairs committee is to develop policies addressing two fundamental questions posed by Joseph F. Kauffman, professor of educational administration at the University of Wisconsin:

- How will the institution meet the needs of the increasingly diverse student body it admits?
- What are the basic student services that the institution is obligated to provide, and how do we tell the difference between adequate services and those that are inadequate, or the poor from the excellent?

Structure

The size, selection, and rotation of student affairs committee members will vary with the traditions and policies of the individual institution. Members obviously must have a genuine interest in students, but also must have some understanding of the nuances of student life.

People experienced in areas such as counseling and ministry may be logical choices, but so perhaps would be the real estate developer who has just put four children through college, or the businesswoman who returned to get her

degree after raising a family. These individuals are likely to have some special insights into the concerns and interests of students.

The committee should, if possible, number students among its membership, in either a voting or nonvoting capacity depending on board policy or state law. Both graduate (if applicable) and undergraduate students should be included.

This will help diffuse the criticism that trustees are "out-of-touch" with student life. It will also give students a greater sense of ownership and control over issues that are critical to them. However, care must be taken to avoid complacency—to assume that such representation or membership is sufficient precludes other initiatives by board members to "keep in touch."

All trustees, but particularly those on the student affairs committee, should receive *and read* the student newspaper. Committee members should keep abreast of the work of the student government body, special councils and committees. And they should be seen at student events from time to time.

While on campus, members can chat informally with students, gathering anecdotal information and student opinions. Of course, they must avoid being too accessible or reacting directly to requests rather than referring students to the appropriate administrative office. The trustees' role should be that of interested observer, not investigator.

Agenda

Committee meetings should be frequent and well publicized; and at least a few such meetings held on campus.

The agenda, developed by the chief

student affairs officer and committee chair, should be sent to members well in advance of the meeting, along with appropriate backup material. This material should be brief but sufficiently detailed to provide an understanding of issues and options.

Further, back-up material should be prepared especially for the committee. Often the information trustees receive is overly detailed or focused on administrative concerns rather than policy issues; or it presents only the option recommended, omitting sufficient discussion of why alternatives were discarded.

The items on the committee agenda will range widely, from evaluation of courses and faculty to topics such as student activity fees, use of alcoholic beverages, and parking.

Responsibilities

The responsibilities of the student affairs committee fall into four broad areas:

1. *Representing students' interests in all policy decisions made by the board;*
2. *Ensuring the provision of adequate financial resources to support a comprehensive student affairs program;*
3. *Ensuring that board policies keep pace with students' changing needs as the institution enrolls a more diverse student body;*
4. *Being visible to students as stewards of the health and welfare of the academic community.*

Responsibility #1: Representing students' interests in the board's policymaking activities.

Just as the finance committee focuses on the budget, and the buildings and

grounds committee concentrates on the physical plant, the central concern of the student affairs committee is the welfare of students.

Not only does the student affairs committee take the lead in developing policies that directly affect students, such as counseling programs, residence hall rules and regulations, and codes of student conduct; it also sees that students' interests are considered when the buildings and grounds committee formulates a plan to refurbish classroom buildings or when the academic affairs committee decides to eliminate or establish academic programs.

For this reason, occasional joint meetings with other board committees are critical.

Of course, representing students does not imply that the committee should simply act as a "rubber stamp" for the currently enrolled student majority. Its role, rather, is to offer its special awareness of students' needs as guidelines in board decisions on policies aimed at improving the institution as a whole.

To develop this awareness, the student affairs committee should closely monitor the discussions and actions of student groups. Many institutions have a campus student affairs committee composed of students and faculty which advises the administration, particularly the chief student affairs officer, on policies, programs, and services. A representative of this body should be designated liaison with the board student affairs committee.

The president, the chief student affairs officer, and the student affairs committee must all have a clear understanding of one another's roles, responsibilities, and expectations. Although the committee must be careful not to overstep its policymaking role to

dabble in administration, it is wise to have "several heads" in discussion rather than one or two individuals making decisions in isolation.

Responsibility #2: Ensuring adequate resources for student affairs programs.

Student services are integral to the academic enterprise, not ancillary. Yet in times of financial exigency and retrenchment, this budget item is often viewed as expendable. Wholesale cuts may seem advisable in the short-term, but will have long-term negative results.

Recommendations to institute a variety of "user fees" as a way to offset deficits need to be examined for their effect on the overall student services program. On the surface, such fees may seem cost effective, but they reflect poorly on the institution's commitment in this area.

Student consumerism is an accepted concept. Students demand and expect value for their money. Trustees, too, should expect accountability for the dollars expended on student services.

There are several good models of evaluation of student affairs programs. Retention is often keyed to an institution's environment: return rates in residence halls, involvement in campus activities and organizations, use patterns in student health and counseling services often demonstrate students' satisfaction with the services and the school.

Responsibility #3: Keeping pace with the changing needs of students.

Student demographics today are vastly different from what they were 10, even five years ago. It is incumbent on trustees to learn something of the

special needs of these "new students" and the strengths diversity can offer the campus. Several useful reports and books on this subject are included in the Resource List on page 10.

The student affairs committee is responsible for assuring that board policies keep pace with the needs of these students. Just a few of the issues the committee, and the board, may consider are:

- *counseling*
- *evening classes*
- *developmental and remedial programs*
- *evening hours for faculty advisors, counselors, financial aid officers*
- *store-front services*
- *extensive career services*
- *child care*
- *services for students in off-campus programs*
- *facilities and services for handicapped students*
- *extended educational facilities for senior citizens*

Responsibility #4: Maintaining visibility as stewards of student health and welfare.

Colleges and universities are complex and, in the main, misunderstood. It is important for students to see the people who make decisions on their behalf. The roles and responsibilities of governing boards are seldom understood by most students. Indeed the governing board may be largely ignored by the student body unless a controversial issue is discussed.

In truth, most of the dialogue affecting students occurs in the student affairs committee, and, unless there is considerable dissent on a matter, trustees usually accept the recommendations of the committee and move on. There is merit to this, and

some risk as well. There may be occasions when the board will disagree with a committee recommendation or otherwise refer a matter back to the committee for more study.

Interpersonal relationships with students build valuable networks of input and set benchmarks for creative problem solving. Trustees may even give statements of their position on issues as long as there is an orderly mechanism for doing so. Students are quick to identify "fourflushers," and key in on any statement that questions the integrity of the process.

A trustee's informal presence is often more important than any utterance. Students will view that as integral to a sense of caring and responsibility for the community of which they are a part.

Conclusion

What is the payoff? What will be the result of an informed trustee taking an active and viable interest in the quality of students and the quality of student life? What results can there be in an informed constituency—people who believe in the essence of the integrity of governance and a well-understood delineation of roles and expectations? Accountability has long been a problem of semantics, particularly in postsecondary education.

Howard R. Bowen in his book *The State of the Nation and the Agenda for Postsecondary Education* says, "Unfortunately, the early 1980s is a time of uncertainty and pessimism among educators . . . their goals range from sheer survival to maintenance of the status quo and seldom include ambitious new projects. Such a time of limitation would seem to be less than

propitious for the advocacy of any new responsibility.

"Yet a higher education system without vision beyond next year's budget may be in a more precarious position than one that represents great plans that demonstrate the inadequacy of the present condition. Moreover, circumstances may change the ways that affect what higher education can achieve or become.

"New technologies, new theories of economics and politics, new religious or philosophical movements, new levels of prosperity, depression, or war may alter the environment and the potential of higher education. Educators should not supinely accept the present situation as permanent but continually present new long-range possibilities to the public and their leaders."

My own reaction to that is perhaps more simplistic. Trustee stewardship means, or should mean, leadership. Your task as a trustee is to teach the community that the institution is a sanctuary of sanctuaries for free thought, and then work to make sure that it really is. The central task of the student affairs committee is to ensure that the board is aware of why it exists and for whom the institution exists.

Resources

Designing Campus Environments, by Leland R. Kaiser (*NASPA Journal*, 13, 1975, 33–39). A discussion of the relationships between facility design and the growth and development of college students.

Education and Identity, by Arthur Chickering (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1969). A conceptual offering of how a college might provide an environment conducive to student growth and development.

The Impact of College on Students, by Theodore M. Newcomb and Kenneth A. Feldman (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1969). A landmark longitudinal study following up persons after college and offering significant findings about the impact of college-going.

"Resource Allocation and Program Budgeting," by Ray Muston. In *New Directions for Student Services: Applying Management Techniques*, (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1980). A chapter describing resource development and allocation for student affairs programs in colleges and universities.

The Student Personnel Role: Curriculum Catalyst, by Bernard A. Hodinko (*NASPA Journal*, 11, 1973, 53–58). The relationship between student affairs and academic affairs is explored and clarified.

When Dreams and Heroes Died, by Arthur Levine (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1981). Results of a study of college students, their values, attitudes, hopes and fears.

AGB Standing Committee Series

This is the fourth in a series of publications on the key standing committees of the board of trustees. These concise, pocket-size publications are designed to provide important information on committee issues and operations for every member of the board. Other titles published or planned are:

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